

ACTION PLAN (December 2017)

WEOGUFKA STATE FOREST & FLAGG MOUNTAIN

240 acres of upland hardwood in a remote area of Coosa County (see map)
Flagg Mountain is southernmost Appalachian peak over 1,000 feet.

TIMELINE:

- 1935: Tower and cabins built by CCC in 1935, 50' stone tower, walls 2+ feet thick (see pictures that follow). The tower is registered as National Historic Lookout Tower #250. Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) acquired this property during that same time.
- 1989: AFC-staffed until 1989 for wildfire detection & office.
- 1997: AFC leased to Coosa County Cooperators (CCC), a local group, to improve property and buildings. CCC installed new windows, metal roofs, walls, two water wells, electricity, and performed many other repairs. This was a 10-year lease, that was renewed once. The lease expired Jan 2017.
- 2003: AFC signed a MOA with Alabama Hiking Trail Society (AHTS) to install a hiking trail along the north and east side of the property.
- 2010: House Resolution 246 engrossed to create the Alabama Appalachian Mountain Trail Commission to study purchase of lands and trail expansion to Flagg Mountain.
- 2015: The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) obtained 750 acres from The Conservation Fund through the Forever Wild Program, ADECA, and private donations. The AL Hiking Trail Society and ADCNR built the new sections of trail. Ribbon cutting ceremony of the extended trail (5 miles) and new Kiosk, which is currently the southern-most section of the Pinhoti Trail. The property and trail join the east side of Weogufka State Forest (see map).

AFC met with CCC to discuss future options for the property. At that time, they turned management of the property back to AFC. AHTS and ADCNR

have been helping AFC to maintain and make some improvements to the property.

AFC created a new Facebook page, ***“Friends of Flagg Mountain”***, to build a local support group of interested people. AFC is using this page to reach out to the hiking community to get feedback on ideas and plans, announce events, and get “buy-in”. Over 600 friends follow this page.

- 2016: Started to develop long-term plans for the property. Was directed to stop work until further notice because of local concerns. Then were waiting for new State Forester to be hired and review history to decide on future direction.
- 2017: CCC Lease officially ended.

State Forester, Rick Oates, visited the property and met with AHTS officials.

AHTS Repaired one cabin so it can be lived in by a caretaker.

AFC held a community listening session, where 100+ people attended, with good community input and willingness to assist in re-opening Flagg Mountain for recreational use. The Coosa County Commissioners and other elected officials expressed a willingness to assist to ensure the site could be used by the public. The members of the CCC also expressed their support.

AFC developed the following Action Plan:

PROPERTY GOAL STATEMENT:

“Through the collaboration with the “Friends of Flagg Mountain” the Alabama Forestry Commission intends to build upon the work performed by the Coosa County Cooperators (CCC) to restore Flagg Mountain cabins and lookout tower to near-original condition, with a few necessary adjustments to open the facilities to the public for primitive camping and sightseeing with minimal maintenance requirements.”

ACTION PLAN:

- In consultation with the retired USFS CCC historian, the architect that refurbished Cheaha State Park and/or the architect that refurbished DeSoto State Park, local community and AHTS member input, private fund managers, hire an architect to develop and oversee plans to rebuild the tower stairs, ensure tower building integrity for public use, build at the cabin site a central bath house, water tank, water pumping system, and septic system.

(Investigate if Auburn Building Science Department students and staff could be used to develop plans with the State Building Commission? Investigate if the Little River bathhouse plans can be incorporated to save costs?)

AFC to pay for the plan developments. AFC and AHTS to solicit 100% private funds for the implementation of these plans.

- AFC to clear area to be developed as a primitive campground area along the ridge north of the cabins. Using private funds, add up to 12 primitive campsites (tents only) with one parking area near the camp sites and one community fire pit in the middle of the camp sites. Run a water line from the water tower to the general community area for drinking water (1-2 water spouts). Add a picnic table and camping pit to every site. The campsites would be available to the public for primitive overnight camping.
- In consultation with radio technicians and owner of the ham radio tower, remove all radio antennas from the tower; if allowable move the ham radio tower to within the fence containing the APT tower; and remove the concrete block radio-equipment building that is next to the tower.
- Expand the existing MOA with AHTS to repair the remaining cabins in addition to the existing agreement for the trail maintenance. (Review and attempt to reduce the liability insurance amount required.) There will **not** be running water, toilets, or sinks in the cabins (except for the caretaker's cabin). There will be electricity for lighting and at least one electrical outlet for each cabin. The cabins would be available to the public for primitive overnight sleeping.

- Hire a part-time caretaker who works for AFC. AFC would pay 25% of their part-time salary, while private funding would cover 75% of their salary. Solicit private funding sources, Alabama special legislative funding, and Coosa County assistance for the 75% funding. This position would be on-site at least 3 days per week. Other AFC staff, AHTS members, and Coosa County staff could be present at other times. Schedule and salary to be agreed upon later.
- Convert the enclosed room next to the tower into a museum as originally planned. Add historical artifacts, the history of Flagg Mountain, and other interesting displays. Install a wood-burning insert into the existing fire-place for low-cost heat. This room would be locked except when staff are present.

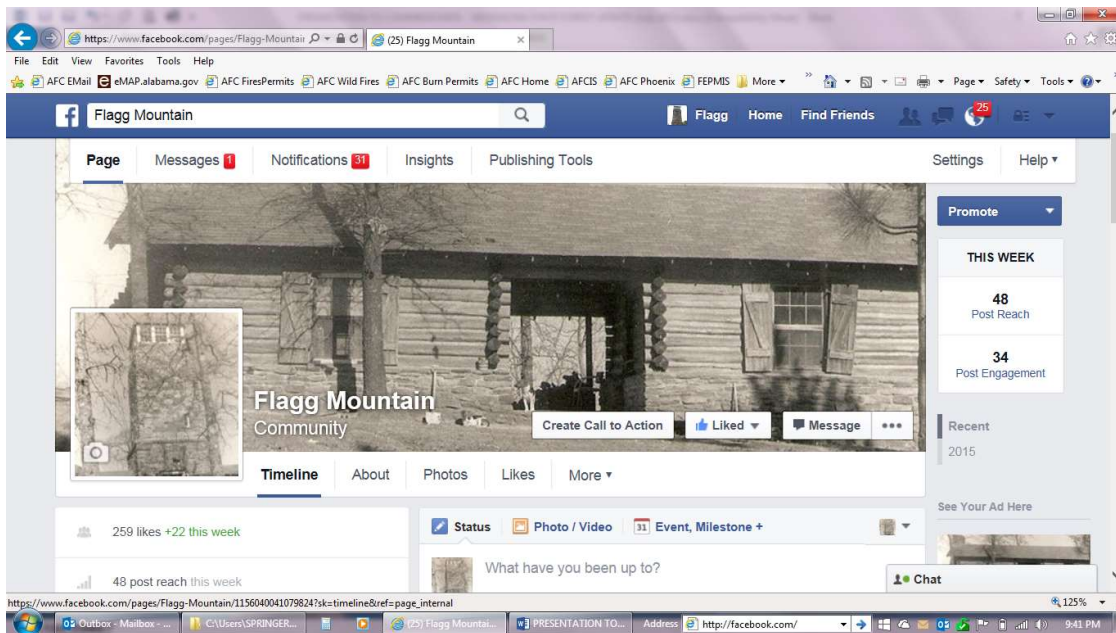
Get the AFC Media Team to interview Mr. John Roberts, who lived at the site during his childhood, and others, to develop a historical video to be played at the museum and for historical reference. Use the Coosa County History Book from Coosa News, the “History of the CCC” book from the University of Alabama, and other information to build the museum’s exhibits and displays.

- Add security cameras for the tower, cabin, and campsite areas to discourage vandalism and enhance site security.
- Move the locked gate on the tower road closer to the tower so the public can visit the tower site when the caretaker is not present and be able to safely turn around when leaving.
- For REVENUE, charge a user fee for the campgrounds and cabins (~\$5-\$35 per night). Set up a reservation system, to be managed by the caretaker and AFC staff in the Coosa County office.

Set up a donation collection system at the museum. Continue the use of the GoFundMe account for Flagg Mountain.

Note: It is very difficult to estimate what revenue would be generated because it is unknown until after the first several years what will be the use rate for these improved facilities.

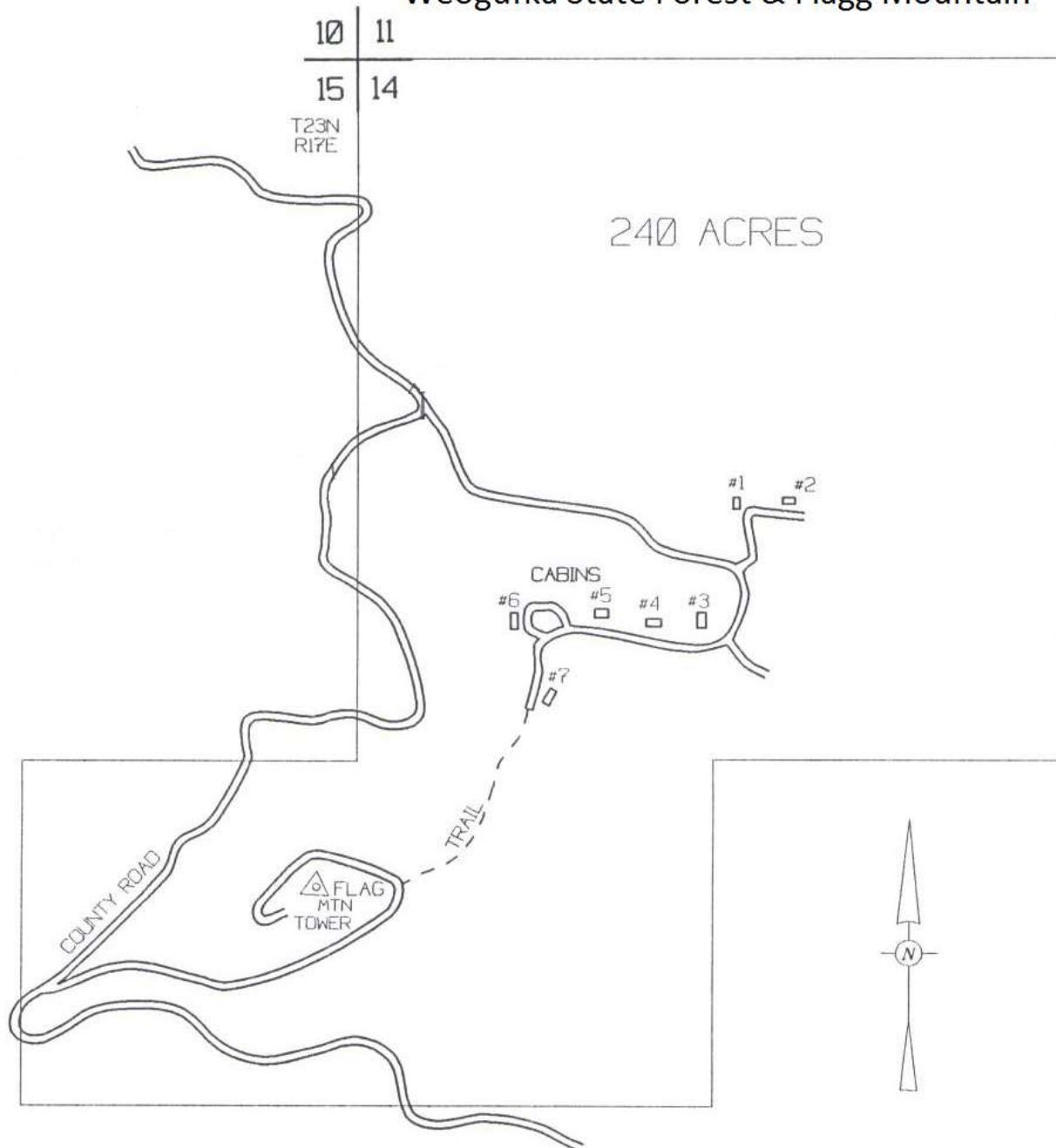




“Friends of Flagg Mountain” Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Flagg-Mountain/1156040041079824>

Weogufka State Forest & Flagg Mountain



Weogufka State Forest Addition Topo Map

